Covering letter for submission of Final Synopsis of Ph.D Thesis

Date: 23.06.2022

To

The Dean-Research
Lingaya's Vidhyapeeth,
Nachauli, Jasana Road, Old
Faridabad, Haryana-121002

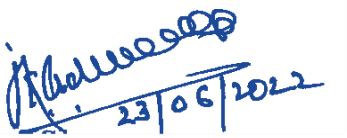
Respected Sir,

Subject: Submission of Final Synopsis of Ph.D Thesis for approval and necessary action

I am submitting herewith Three spiral bound copies of the synopsis for my Ph.D thesis entitled "**A Study of Opportunities and Challenges For Rural Markets in Baksa District of Assam**" for your kind perusal and consideration including external evaluation. The following documents are being submitted along with the Thesis copy (enclosures as below).

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,



(Prof. Dr. Jivan K. Chowdhury)
Agarwal
Research Supervisor

Name: Shweta

Enrollment No.:
18PHMG04

(Research Scholar)
School of Commerce & Management
Lingaya's Vidyapeeth, Faridabad

A STUDY OF OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR RURAL MARKETS IN BAKSA DISTRICT OF ASSAM

SYNOPSIS

SUBMITTED TO

LINGAYA'S VIDYAPEETH

IN THE PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE

DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN
MANAGEMENT

BY

SHWETA AGARWAL (18PHMG04)

SCHOOL OF COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

LINGAYA'S VIDYAPEETH, FARIDABAD, HARYANA

JUNE 2022

Abstract

Agriculture and allied activities form the backbone of the economy of Assam state. It plays a very significant role in the socio-economic development as this sector is a major contributor toward the state GDP. Assam is an agriculture-based economy thus efficient and effective agricultural marketing system plays a very significant role in economic and social lives of rural people. This system not only promotes increase in economic activity but also supports in proper and economic utilization of the produce (both farm and off-farm). RURAL MARKETS form the structure of agricultural marketing system of Rural India. These markets are classified according to their spatial and temporal specialization, thus categorized as daily, periodic and special markets. Periodic markets happen once on fixed days of each week or month in smaller marketplaces which are insufficient to merit permanence. These markets play a significant role in rural/ tribal settings since the market is not just a mere place of buying and selling but it is also a place for socializing, meeting distant friends and relatives. It is a medium for passing down information from urban to rural communities and outlines the performance indicators of all business activities involved from production uptill final consumer.

However, this system of agriculture marketing is very complex in nature and involves large number of trade channels from procurement of agricultural produce to the final sales. The overriding factor in the entire process of agriculture marketing is the instantaneous recovery from the produce sold. There are large number of problems/ bottlenecks relating not only to immediate returns from the produce sold but also on the management of produce (from post-harvest handling to final consumer). Availability of proper physical infrastructure is another big challenge that farmers from Assam face all the time (whether it is relating to the catchment area/ coverage, market accessibility, transportation, availability of proper marketing sheds or market information system for price discovery). Due to lack of these facilities, and especially price discovery mechanism, proper and justified recovery for farmers is not guaranteed. The supply chain network comprises of many layers, thus not even 1/3rd of the value is recovered by the farmer rest all is distributed/ absorbed by the intermediaries involved. Availability of improved infrastructure, proper market information forms the basis of increase in efficiency of the entire market system (both economic and social). Improvement in the market system means direct improvement of the agriculture market system supporting social and economic growth of the region. Literature is being reviewed to understand the state of knowledge on the influences that shape these rural-periodic markets and to explain the resilience of these markets. The evaluation of the literature provides some understanding on the reason for the resilience.

One of the key aspects of the study is Socio-economic development (Livelihood opportunities) has and its inevitable role to human development (Quality of life). It is seen as an activity that allow people to secure

necessities of life while market serves as a physical place where sellers and buyers meet to exchange goods and services.

Keeping the above in view, the study will examine the challenges of the agriculture marketing system (the rural markets) and available economic opportunities on agricultural produce and marketing for social from eighty-one (81) periodic markets in Baksa District of the state of Assam covering eight (08) development blocks with main objectives on spatial characteristics and livelihood opportunities from the markets. Using non-probabilistic sampling approach, a purposive sampling technique will be applied to randomly distribute two sets of questionnaires to sellers and buyers. A total number of 150 questionnaires will be administered and the data will be analysed descriptively. Other livelihood opportunities will also be identified which may include but are not limited to; transportation, loading- unloading, cleaners, weigh bridge and others. Based on the overall survey and analysis, the study will provide recommendation on market requirements (improved and developed market facilities conditions that will enhance the socio economic conditions of the people within and outside the host communities) in order to meet the challenges and also contribute to socio-economic development (poverty alleviation) in all forms. For this study, primary and secondary data are considered.

Keywords: ***Rural Markets, Agricultural Marketing, Opportunities, Challenges, Marketing Information, Social and Economic Empowerment***

Introduction

Markets are man-made features established for the use by people and are fundamental to their economic, social, cultural, religious and political life. They play a dynamic role not only in the rural socio-economic development but also in regional level. A thorough review of literature dealing with periodic markets in some parts of the world has been done, with a view to understanding the characteristics of these markets. However, Devanagaon et al., (2010), noted that although the development of rural periodic markets plays an important role in improving the socio-economic status of the rural communities, it received very little attention in many developing countries.

The role of markets in rural development planning is the need of the hour to study (Mulimani & Belgaum, 2012). Markets in rural areas are not only the centres of marketing activity but they are also the nucleus of development. They have economical, social, cultural importance and they help in increasing social contacts, serve as focal point of circulation and becomes the nerve center for political and other activities. They are the controlling points of any marketing system and have an important role in stimulating production and consumption and are also helpful in addressing the needs for economic development in the region. Thus, development of markets implies the economic development of the region and improved market always allows/ attracts development of agriculture, transportation, industries etc., which ultimately lead to overall regional development (Powar and Lokhande, 2004).

Markets are sites with social, economic, cultural and other reference marks, where there are a number of buyers and sellers, where the price offered and paid by each is affected by the decisions of the others (Belshaw, 1969). They are the means, by which the exchange of goods and services takes place as a result of buyers and sellers coming in contact with one another, either directly or indirectly. In the modern industrial system, however, a market is not limited to a specific location but includes the whole geographical area in which sellers compete with each other for customers and also a specific group of potential customers who have been identified (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2009). Markets are classified according to their temporal specialization and this gives them particular unique characteristics; and thus are divided into daily, periodic and special markets (Bromley, 1971). According to Lynch (2005), periodic markets are a response to what is described as temporal arbitrage, where traders meet once on fixed days of each week or month in smaller market settings which are insufficient to merit permanence. Another way of explaining such a system is to note that there is repeated movement of traders nearer to their customers. This makes trade more efficient than the infrequent movement of individual customers to a permanent market. Periodic markets take extra shopping and trading opportunities to the rural communities. According to Mulimani and Belgaum (2012), they are the most wide spread exchange system and play a dynamic role in the rural socio-economic development.

Commercial activities among rural dwellers are mostly carried out through periodic markets. Among the importance of periodic markets is their major role in bridging the gap of social and economic isolation associated with rural areas as well as integrating peasant traditional societies into regional and national socioeconomic systems. Some of these roles are well researched and documented (Lado, 1988; Geist, 1990). Although the importance of periodic markets to national development are unfortunately under estimated, they serve as focal points for exchange of commodities and innovation; avenues for social function; center for communication and entertainment and points for rural evangelism (Park, 1981).

Most of the internal trades of local produce are directed through these periodic markets, especially in agrarian set up. People residing in rural areas prefer to assemble in these markets at regular intervals after attending to their scheduled agricultural activities throughout the week. After producing their agricultural and horticultural commodities they wish to dispose the surpluses in their nearby periodic markets from where normally local, long distance sellers or consumers procure the same commodity in cheaper rate than that of the permanent market and subsequently sell in urban markets. Thus, a periodic market plays an important role in promoting the socioeconomic condition of the rural community. In most of the developing countries, these market centers serve as focal points of health delivery, local administration, political campaigns, religious programs, information exchange and innovation, diffusion and entertainment (Addo ,1977 ;Udo ,1982 ;Gormsen ,1985 ;Wanmali 1985 ;Alam ;1985). These markets also promote regional economic interaction. For rural/ tribal communities in Baksa District, periodic markets serve diverse socioeconomic activities.

Periodic markets in Baksa district are held at regular interval in weekly, bi-weekly and tri-weekly basis and act as a nerve center for socioeconomic, socio-cultural and socio-political harmony. These markets play a diverse role in integration at regional level by acting as the principal agency of satisfying the usual needs of rural people on one hand and by addressing the regional economic interface through movement of long-distance sellers/ intermediaries on the other.

Organized in a rational manner, a region's several periodic markets require spatial and temporal integration to work smoothly: meeting days are distributed among the seven days of the market week, with schedules taking into consideration the convenience of both sellers and consumers. Diverse services are available at rural periodic market center, including the buying and selling of local perishable and fragile commodities such as vegetables or earthenware pots; and non-agricultural employment opportunities are available for trading and other activities. Also, farmers can easily obtain fertilizers, seeds, insecticides and pesticides; and periodic markets offer the raw materials for household level industries, bringing development to rural areas.

Review of literature

In the present study the attempt has been made to review some of the relevant literature related to the subject selected. H.M Saxena (1988) emphasized on the 'Rural Markets are the nerve center of economic, social, and cultural activities and also the farmer's first contact point with marketing, channel which helped a lot in understanding of periodic market's contribution to rural economies. Again in 2004 he focused on spatio-temporal aspects and synchronization of periodic markets. Smith (1971) in a study found that in many societies there exist systems of peasant markets which at their lowest level function only periodically. These market places play a vital role in the integration of the regional marketing system and the spatial organization of economic activities. They are one of the basic types of exchange mechanisms found in these societies; mediating exchange among different groups of local producers on the one hand and itinerant traders and wholesalers on the other. B.W. Hodder (1961), contributed significantly to the field of marketing geography by throwing light on the rural periodic markets in a part of Yorubaland. R.K Shrivastava (2006) narrated the issues like spatio-temporal relationships, hierarchical reorganization, mobility pattern of traders and morphological pattern of the markets. Udosen and Adams (2009) examined spatio-temporal synchronization of periodic markets in Akwa Ibom State, using eighteen periodic markets as a case study.

In another study Kashyap & Raut (2006) tried to study market mechanism of rural markets in terms of community participation in the rural markets and found out that markets provide numerous platforms for community gatherings and showcasing the specialties of such various communities of nearby regions. Sinha & Pradhan (2009) in their study highlighted the market mechanism of haats (periodic markets) from the point of view of goods transactions and opined that haats are usually for direct sales of small quantities of produce by farmers to village traders and rural consumers. They often form part of a network arranged on a periodic basis, such as on a specific day of each week. They are commonly organized at a central place in a village or district center or beside a village's access road. Deka & Bhagbati (2010) also highlighted the significance of rural markets in the socio-economic life of rural communities in rural areas of Bhahmaputra-Valley, Assam. Their study finds that rural markets are characterized by relatively low priced goods and services, poor infrastructure facilities, undefined stalls, lack of store house, absence of credit in transaction and poor transport and communication medium. Sarkar et al (2014) found that the rural markets can also be credited to exert an indirect impact on the productivity by acting as center of social gatherings, which happen seldom in rural areas. A similar research was conducted by Roy & Basu (2010) and found that rural markets are main centers for exchange of common goods and services in both the sub-urban as well as countryside all over the world. Ali (2009) has conducted a research study on vegetables transaction through rural markets and the findings of his field surveys of selected periodic markets reveal high transaction of vegetables (62.71%), due to freshness and perishable nature which discourage long distance for the trade and handled by small famers and pity traders.

P Ryngnga, & B. B. L Ryntathiang, in 2012 in Journal 'International Journal of Social Science Tomorrow' published the article on 'Periodic Market and Rural Development: An Appraisal Study of Cherrapunjee of Meghalaya' emphasized periodic market in the tribal, rural area of Meghalaya in which Iew Sohra (Cherrapunjee) periodic market acts as the main artery to cater to the services and needs of the other rural neighbourhood. To further the work draws attention to the market mechanism, functions, etc. in order to distinguish the served and un-served area of nearly villages or area to reduce the spatial gaps and take the un-served area in the fold of serving area by proposing new periodic markets in the study region.

A thorough analysis of periodic markets of Singhbhum district of Bihar by S.V. Wanmali concentrates on the nature of distribution and characteristics of goods and services as a part of a system of distribution. His taxonomical study of periodic markets in a non-plain region indicates that even in a tribal set up, the periodic market, as a trading centre, forms the part of a larger exchange and distributional system of goods and services may change from that of a plain area, but there is a close resemblance in the nature of trading of goods and services. Hence, Wanmali stresses the inclusion of periodic market centres as focal points of implementation of rural development plans, so that the benefits of the development programs could be availed properly and optimally by the all sections of people in rural society.

Periodic markets, which are sometimes known as neighbourhood markets or weekly markets are, according to Hodder (1965), official public gatherings of sellers and buyers in a designated location on a designated time. Periodic markets are familiar features of most rural Africa, Asia and Latin America. As noted by many scholars such as Getis et al., (2008); Crissman (2010), Tacolli (2004), and Topcu (2006), they are types of markets commonly found in many developing countries and they generally show the local economic, political and social characteristics. Hodder and Lee (1974), note that periodism is an essential element of local, especially rural, indigenous market structure in most developing countries today, as indeed it was in medieval Europe.

Gosh (1982), says that periodic marketing has attracted the attention of scholars from various disciplines, many of whom have attempted to explain why such markets arise and how they are organised in space and time. Most of these studies have been done in South America, Asia, the Middle East, West and East Africa. It was noted by Tokman (1992) and Bromley (1992), that research on periodic markets is greater in developing countries.

During the last four decades, there has been a remarkable growth of interest among geographers to study rural markets. The volume of literature on rural markets is vast and it is neither possible nor desirable to review the entire literature.

The hierarchy of periodic markets has been examined in detail by Skinner (1964), Berry (1967), C.A. Smith (1976) and Bromley (1974).Skinner (1964), in his study of rural China have found that marketing systems

exist in an integrated pattern of hierarchy. Several variables like volume of trade, number of shops, total number of people assembled, etc., have been used by geographers in order to study the hierarchical pattern. Periodicity is an important aspect of rural marketing. In his study of African periodic markets, Good (1973) has suggested that 'the distribution of market periodicities and market networks presents a complex array of function, distinct, contiguous, and overlapping systems: a kaleidoscope of place- time interrelationships'.

P. P. Bale in 2011 wrote the article on 'A geographical comparative analysis of service areas of cattle market centres in Solapur District', in Indian Streams Research Journal, with an objective of the present investigation is to make an enquiry into the service area of cattle market centres in Solapur district of Maharashtra. The measurement of service areas of cattle market centres is important for understanding marketing data, market centres performance and such kind of studies help to find out the served areas as well as poorly, moderately and highly served area in the study region.

History of rural economy

Rural Development has never been a new concept for India it is rather interwoven in the heritage of Indian culture, mention of it has been made along with the history of mankind. Even in the famous epics and drams like Ramayana and Mahabharata the instances of rural governance in terms of welfare of the people, justice to the people has been made. The philosophy of governance in such literature gives hints of Rural Development.

"I know that the work [of making an ideal village] is as difficult as to make of India an ideal country. But, while it is possible for one man to fulfill his ambition with respect to a single village some day, one man's lifetime is too short to overtake the whole of India. But if one man can produce one ideal village, he will have provided a pattern not only for the whole country, but perhaps for the whole world. More than this a seeker may not aspire after"- Mahatama Gandhi (Harijan, 4.8.1940)

The village in India holds a unique place, both in the social and economic spheres. There are 212.6 million people living in rural areas in 1901, in 2011 rural population has increased to 833 million naturally the density of population has increased, land under agriculture has diminished, affected the forests and exodus to urban areas accelerated agricultural labor continued to be exploited.

When India emerged as an independent country in 1947, it inherited this momentum from its immediate past and had, moreover, the nucleus of technical know-how and even infrastructure in rural development. Planning has been one of the pillars of the Indian policy since independence and the country's strength is derived from the achievement of planning. The policies and programmes have been designed with the aim of alleviation of rural poverty which has been one of the primary objectives of planned development in

India. Thus, the formation of Planning commission in 1950 and First Five Year Plan with its main thrust of the first five-year plan was set to be Community Development and Rural Extension.

The review of first to eleven five-year plan gives an idea of the importance and concern given to rural development. Various programmes and policies for rural development are introduced. Thus, it has been understood that Rural Development was, is and will going to be a major concern for development policy, planning and implementation.

Economy of Northeastern States of India

Northeast Region of India constitutes the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. NER covers an area of 2.62 lakh sq.km. It accounts for 7.9% of total geographical area of the country. The economy of the region is mainly agriculture; comprising of agriculture and horticultural crops.

The rural/ weekly markets are unorganized in the region and dominated by the private traders. The northeastern states have observed high production of fruits, spices and cashew in the recent past but could not fetch market price to the farmers at par with the markets in the other states. The topography of the NE states is not favorable for the movement of the products. Besides, the infrastructure, procurement practices, marketing approaches and processing facilities are also observed as the major constraints in the rural markets in the NE region. The social and cultural taboos are also responsible to a large extent in not developing agro-industries in the region to provide better value addition to the horticultural crops. In recent years the "Look East Policy" of Government of India has made North East more important and strategic.

Agriculture and Marketing System in NER

Marketing of agricultural commodities in the northeastern states, by and large, is dominated by the private traders due to the absence of proper implementation of Market Regulation Act by the State Agricultural Marketing Boards. Among all the states in the region, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura have Market Regulation Act. In Tripura, it has been enacted and implemented to some extent for non-food grain crops like jute and mesta. In Assam, the implementation process is hampered due to various litigations put up by the traders. The agricultural produce marketing act in Meghalaya has been enacted but it is yet to be implemented while in Manipur preparation of the bill is in process. A brief description of the trade practices related to agricultural commodities in different states of the region is given below. Assam as an agricultural state the rural population is about 87.5 per cent living in 25124 villages (Economic Survey, Assam, 2010-11) [7]. Out of the total rural population about 75 per cent depend directly upon agriculture. The overall

economy of the state depends upon the agricultural development and, hence, agricultural sector has been receiving considerable attention in the planning process. Assam grows large number agricultural crops like paddy, pulses, oilseed, spices, fibre crop like jute, mesta and cotton and fruits and vegetables. Under the existing system of agricultural marketing in Assam, farm produces change many hands before reaching the consumer. The middleman, in the process extracts a large share of consumer's rupee while the farmer gets only a small share. Taking advantage of the farmer's

Poor condition and weak bargaining power in the transaction, a set of middlemen at different stages have emerged as a powerful channel for the procurement of food grains. Thus, the farmer needs protection from such exploitation and also assistance in many respects.

Assam

Assam, the gateway to the Northeast India is the largest State in the North East is bordering seven states viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Monipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and West Bengal and two countries viz. Bangladesh & Bhutan. The State is endowed with abundant fertile land and water resources with total geographical area of 78,438 sq.km. of which 98.4 % area is rural. Assam shares about 2.4 % of the country's total geographical area and provides shelter to 2.6 % population of the country. For administrative and revenue purposes, the state has 33 districts including four districts Under the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) area viz. Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baska & Udalguri and 6 newly created districts viz., Biswanath, Charaideo, Hojai, South Salmara-Macachar , West Karbi-Anglong and Majuli.

Agriculture and Rural Marketing system in Assam

Agricultural markets function as an important link connecting rural production centers to the consumption and distribution centres in the State. They constitute themselves a system of supply and distribution as both wholesale and retail. These markets also facilitate formation of price that is accepted by the distribution chain. Agricultural and food marketing environment can be categorized in four main sub-systems, viz. production, distribution and consumption and regulatory. The key players in the chain of activities that connect food and agriculture are the farmers, intermediaries, the food processors and the

consumers.

While the agricultural production in Assam has reached to 120 lakh MT in last 60 years, the number of markets servicing agricultural production is more or less static. The youngest market in the State is 15 years old. Some 1200 markets channelize agricultural and allied products of the state for last 50-60 years. The

population of the state has also reached nearly 3.0 crores in past 60 years but there has been no corresponding increase in the number of the markets serving producer, traders and consumers.

The markets in Assam under different ownerships operate under pressure in terms of infrastructure, service and facilities, introduction by innovations, new technologies etc. The market committees operating the markets under different systems earned income from market as cess and had no mandate to plow back revenue so earned towards the development of markets and marketing system. The increase in agricultural production and population of the Assam State have exerted pressure on agricultural markets resulting in severe congestion and making them inhospitable to producers, buyers and consumers.

There are approximately 1150 rural weekly markets in Assam. Locally these are known as haats or bazaar. The rural markets are managed by Anchalik Parishad (block level). The Markets are leased annually by inviting bids. The bid for one market varies from 5 lakhs to 15 lakhs depending on market size. Anchalik Parishad receives money from lessee of which 40% is retained by Anchalik Parishad, 40% is given to Gram Panchayat as the ownership of the land lies with Gram Panchayat and rest 20% is given to Zila Parishad.

Rural Weekly Markets in Assam generally perform three functions, viz.

a) selling of local produce within the area;
b) assembly of local products for selling to other areas; and
c) retailing of wholesale lots from other areas in the local area.

The selling of local produce to traders & consumers is the predominant activity in these markets. Here farmers represent the biggest group either as sellers or as buyers. At times, farmers retail their produce & become traders also. Besides, goods, that are not produced locally, are brought by smaller & occasional traders to retail to local population. These markets, through their interconnections, are a farmer's main connection point with the inter and intra-regional marketing system.

BTC (Bodo Territorial Council)

The Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) is a territorial council for the Bodoland region of Assam state in India. It was established on 10 of February 2003. Its establishment was under the Amended Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. The BTAD consists of four contiguous districts — Kokrajhar, Baksa, Udalguri and Chirang located on the northern bank of Brahmaputra valley — carved out of seven existing districts — Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darrang and Sonitpur — an area of 8,970 km² (11% of Assam land area i.e 78,438 km²) comprising various protected tribal belts and blocks in Assam.

The Bodo economy continued to be based on agriculture. More than 90 percent of the Bodo population live in countryside villages and therefore agriculture is the mainstay of their economy.[1] agricultural operation, another related economic activity in which the Bodos had a natural propensity was animal husbandry, particularly rearing of pigs and fowl. But seldom did they take to it for commercial purpose that is selling in the market on any large scale. Another economic activity in which the Bodos, mainly their womenfolk, work is the rearing of a kind of silkworm on castor-seed plant leaves and drawing silk threads from their cocoons.

Baksa

Baksa District is in North-Western part of Assam (the Lower Assam region) with its administrative headquarters located at Mushalpur (105 kms from state capital, Guwahati). Geographically, the district lies at 26°66'N latitude and 91°36'E longitude. The altitude in the district is 110 m. The distr ict encompasses a geographical area of 2,457 sq km. and it is bounded by Bhutan on the north, Udalguri district on the east, the districts of Barpeta, Nalbari and Kamrupon the south and Chirang district on the west. The principal rivers in the district are Beki, Manas, Pagladia, Puthimari, Pahumara, Kaldia and Barnadi.

According to 2011 census, the district encompasses a geographical area of 2457 sq km and has a population of 9,50,075 (persons) including 4,81,330 (males) and 4,68,745 (females). The district has a sex ratio of 974 (females for every 1000 males). The literacy rate in the district is 69.25% (persons), 77.03% (males) and 61.27% (females). Main spoken languages are Assamese (37.77%), Bodo (31.85%), Bengali (20.35%). Main source of income in the district is from the agriculture sector and per capita income is Rs. 14,809. Total cropped area is 1,41,993 in hectares and the forest area is 556 in sq km (2017). Baksa is one of the 27 Districts of Assam State in North Eastern India, dominated by tribal community.

Market System in Baksa, Assam

Market System forms an integral and interlinking part of the general exchange systems of every market in the state, but the entire market chain is highly fragmented. Most of the transactions in the rural periodic markets involve small quantity of agricultural Produce to purchase the commodities of daily requirements.

These markets function as an important link connecting rural production centres to the consumption and distribution centres in the State. They constitute themselves a system of supply and distribution as both

[1] Janak Lai Basumatary, "Sustainable Economy in BTC area", in The Bodo, (the Mouthpiece of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, 33"* Issue, 2008)

wholesale and retail. These markets also facilitate formation of price that is accepted by the distribution chain.

The agricultural marketing environment and infrastructure development is largely governed by:

1. The Assam Agricultural Produce Market Act 1972,
2. Panchayat Act 1994, and Municipal, Act 1956
3. Assam Agricultural Produce market (General) Rules, 1982; and
4. The bye-laws of the Assam State Agricultural Marketing Board, 1983
5. Market committees (governed by the Bye-laws of Agriculture marketing board and the Agriculture marketing act)

Market system of Baksa, Assam is a process of networks of buyers, sellers and other actors that come together to trade in a given product or service. The participants in a market system include direct market players:

a) Producers: A producer is someone who creates and supplies goods or services;
b) Buyers: A buyer is one who engages in the purchase or acquisition of a part or the entire business organization;
c) Consumers: A consumer is a person (or group) who pays to consume the goods and/or services produced by a seller.

Weekly Markets in Baksa generally perform three functions, viz, (i) selling of local produce within the area (ii) assembly of local products for selling to other areas and (iii) retailing of wholesale lots from other areas in the local area. The selling of local produce to traders & consumers is the predominant activity in these markets. Here farmers represent the biggest group either as sellers or as buyers. At times, farmers retail their produce & become traders also. Besides, goods, that are not produced locally, are brought by smaller & occasional traders to retail to local population. These markets, through their interconnections, are a farmer's main connection point with both inter and intra-regional marketing system.

Besides the organizational and functional dimensions of the marketing system, the flow of commodities is restricted and localized to certain specific areas due to geophysical conditions as well as lack of infrastructure facilities. Consequently, the factors of marketing such as pricing, backward and forward linkages, demand and supply of commodities are greatly affected to the disadvantage of both the producers and the consumers.

This renders the job of determining the commodity-wise and district-wise marketable surplus very difficult. The situation is further compounded by the fact that a chain of middle-men operate as transporters and

traders between the farm-gate and the markets within the state as well as outside including the markets in neighbouring West Bengal, Bhutan and others.

Statement of the Problem

Although rural development plans and programs emphasize the need to develop market institutions and enterprises (Shepherd, 1987; Dixon, 1990; MFPED, 2000), in Assam little attention has been given to rural periodic markets as engines of rural development. Though the agricultural production has been increasing over the years, the system of agricultural marketing has not been fully developed as an integral part of agricultural development in Assam.

Sharma, K K (2018), Deka & Sharmah (2012) and Barah (2007) in their papers made an attempt to study the position of rural markets in NER with respect to the problems in the regional agricultural economies and analyzed the the future prospects for development. None of the studies so far carried out has directly addressed the role of rural periodic markets in enhancing rural or regional development. Again, no study has specifically focused on rural periodic markets in Baksa, Assam.

In Baksa District, rural periodic markets exist in mixed system with trading centres, scattered village shops and daily markets, nevertheless, periodic markets still attract large numbers of seller and buyers. No study has been done to investigate the significance of these markets in job formation, development of agriculture, development of trading centres and social infrastructure, improving access to household necessities, and improving the general welfare of the people of Baksa District.

The study further investigated the impact of weekly markets on the development of trading centres, employment and job formation, acquisition of skills and entrepreneurship development in the district.

Aim of the study

The rural/ periodic market study is useful at various levels, from a policy maker trying to improve the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises, to local government agencies working to improve the earning opportunities of entrepreneurs and workers, to organizations working towards improvement in the conformance of local producers with global standards. The study is also useful for a livelihood promotion programme, that seeks to reduce poverty by helping small enterprises to produce for distant markets and also for a researcher.

The aim of this study is to analyze the existing market access and market penetration, opportunities and challenges, and to identify and prioritize interventions and marketing strategies towards attainment of

Social & Economic Empowerment in Baksa District, Assam. Other services, such as infrastructure and access to credit, will also be explored.

Objectives of the study

The overall objective of the study is to examine the role of periodic markets in enhancing rural development in Baksa District, Assam.

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

1) To examine the spatial distribution of rural periodic markets in Baksa District and the factors for their development.
2) To examine the market calendar regulation leading to variance in the occurrence of periodic markets on each day of the week.
3) To examine the existing position of agricultural marketing in Baksa District with a view to ascertain its problems and prospects.
4) To study the Impact of the periodic markets on the economic conditions of the region.
5) To suggest some measure to overcome the problems of Agricultural Marketing in the region.
6) To integrate the recommendations to existing or proposed Government Policy

Research questions

Based on the research objectives, the research questions for the study are:

1) How are rural periodic markets in Baksa District spatially distributed?
2) What factors have favored the development of rural periodic markets in Baksa District?
3) How much area does each rural periodic market in Baksa District serve?
4) What impacts have rural periodic markets in Baksa District had on economic activities and people's welfare in the market surroundings?
5) What implications do periodic markets in Baksa District have on regional development planning?

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1:

H0: Observed rural weekly markets (point pattern) are randomly distributed

H1: Observed rural weekly markets (point pattern) are significantly different from the random pattern.

Hypothesis 2:

H0: there is no significant relationship between the actual number of markets gathering per week and the expected number of market gatherings

H1: Daily & Bi-weekly markets lead to an increase in market gatherings exceeding the expected number of market days.

Hypothesis 3:

H0: distance travelled by buyers/sellers is not directly proportional to the market size and its location

H1: distance travelled by buyers/ sellers to visit the market center is directly proportional to the size and market location

Hypothesis 4:

H0: There is no significant relationship between the space economy of the scattered village economies and weekly markets in the overall economic development

H1: Weekly markets unites the village economy with the overall economic system and act as the first point of contact for the rural economy.

Justification for the study

Although many studies have shown that rural development is the set of activities and actions of diverse actors – individuals, organizations, and institutions – which taken together lead to progress in rural areas (Shepherd, 1987;Todaro, 1994; MFPED,2000), very few studies have assessed the role of periodic markets as engines in the context of regional/ rural development. In Assam few studies that have so far been done by Sharma KK (2018), Kalita (2017) and Deka & Sarmah (2012), which have examined the existing position of agricultural marketing and the problems faced by farmers. Some reports only talk about the role of these markets with respect to the FMCG goods and their penetration in the rural areas. Thus, the available literature could not be relied up to generate development plans and programs based on periodic markets as engines of regional development.

This study is significant as it provides an analysis of rural periodic markets in Baksa District; focusing on their spatial distribution, organization and periodicity, factors for market development, surroundings of individual markets and their impact on the livelihood of the people such as level of production, increased access to domestic utilities, provision of infrastructure, job formation and development of entrepreneurship.

The study will also contributes valuable information for development planners, policy makers, local governments, investors and other rural workers like Non- governmental organizations (NGOs) that will be of great use when formulating policies and programs geared at creating jobs for the increasing labour force, increasing access to household necessities, ensuring proper revenue collection as well as providing and maintaining social infrastructure in rural areas.

The study seeks to provide information that fills up existing gaps in the stock of knowledge about rural market institutions in Assam and Baksa District in particular. This information clarifies the role of the market institution in development and leaves very little room for guessing when formulating rural development plans and programs. Finally, this study is a basic guide for future studies that may be based on rural markets, marketing systems and their impacts on the livelihoods of the people for the district.

Scope of the Study

The study is being carried out in Baksa District of BTC, Assam. It is covering all eight (8) development blocks of the Baksa district namely Baska Dev. Block, Mushalpur; Tihu-Barama Dev. Block, Barama; Dhamdhama Dev. Block, Baganpara; Jalah Dev. Block, Jalahghat; Tamulpur Dev. Block, Tamulpur; Goreswar Dev. Block, Goreswar; Nagrijuli Dev.t Block, Nagrijuli & Gobardhana Dev. Block, Barpeta Rd thereby covering all one hundred ten (110) weekly, bi-weekly and daily markets in the district. These markets are not open every day but operate on a 7-day cycle. The study beings with the spatial distribution analysis of these markets. Identification of the reasons for the development of these markets in the region, their surroundings, and impact on the levels of production, availability of inputs supporting production system, access to services and provision of social infrastructure is also being studied. The services covered by the study not only include agriculture and horticulture produce, livestock, daily needs but also includes services such as medical care, mechanical repairs, entertainment and leisure, hair dressing, tailoring, as well as exchange of news and information. The social infrastructure covered by the study includes roads, educational institutions, medical facilities, anganwadis, streetlights and drinking water facility.

Research Methodology and Design

The current study was conducted based on extensive fieldwork in the study area covering all 116 rural weekly markets, which was further supplemented by secondary data abstracted from the Assam State Marketing Board, District Statistical Abstracts, and District Census Handbook, District Agriculture Plan, District Irrigation Plan among other sources.

To collect data and information about all aspects of rural weekly market centers, questionnaires, schedule, and interview approaches were used. To determine the participant's behavior, the study used a reconnaissance survey based on a questionnaire and timetable. Primary data was gathered using a questionnaire distributed to respondents (both sellers and purchasers) on market days. The first step in gathering primary data is to conduct a reconnaissance assessment of the specific market centers to improve familiarization and make questionnaire administration easier.

To avoid misinterpretation of questions, questionnaires were distributed to respondents at the village level within a 5km radius of the marketplaces in survey 1. Subject to the type of information required, the surveys featured both closed and open-ended questions. These questions were intended to gather information on the socioeconomic characteristics of farmers who sell their produce at regular markets, the number of products sold at markets, the frequency and pattern of farmers' visits to markets, market facilities, factors that influence the spatial distribution, and development of rural markets, and the benefit of accessing the agricultural marketing system through the route of rural markets.

In survey-2, questionnaires were distributed to buyers and/or traders at the market level to avoid questions being misunderstood. Based on the type of information required, the surveys featured both closed and open-ended questions. These questions are intended to collect information on the buyer/socioeconomic trader's characteristics, the source of produce for trade, the frequency and pattern of buyers' visits to the markets, the facilities available at the market level to support trade activities, taxes, and other market fees that may be applicable, factors that influence the spatial distribution and development of rural markets, and conditions that attract traders and other market participants. In cases where respondents were unable to grasp the former language, the questionnaires were translated from English to Assamese, the local language. In addition, these responses were retranslated into English for record-keeping purposes.

The second stage was that of interview. Information regarding the history of the origin of a specific weekly market and its subsequent evolution was gathered through discussion from elderly people living in the neighborhood of market centers, Gaon Budha/ village headmen, block offices as well as market center organizers. Following the collection of data, special attention was paid to the general characteristics of each of the block's weekly market centers. Both empirical and theoretical approaches were used in the data processing and interpretation.

The broad field study, historical research, and intense analysis resulted in a clear understanding of all the relevant views on rural weekly markets and their role in regional development in the district. Data obtained in the field was first corrected, tallied, and then put to the test using statistical approaches like the nearest neighbor analysis, chi-square goodness of fit, graph theory of connectivity to measure the connectivity indices such as Cyclomatic number (μ), alpha (ά), beta (β), gamma (γ) and Aggregate Transport Score (ATS), Wilcoxon Rank Sum Test, Wilcoxon sign run test and network analysis.

The base map of the rural weekly markets in the Baksa district was prepared. GPS point locations of all periodic rural markets using GPS Mobile Location Finder application. The data received were coordinated using the World Geodetic System (WGS 1984), which provides the x (longitude) and y (latitude) of the location. The Excel spreadsheet for entering primary coordinates data was used for the conversion of the distance between markets by using distance obtained between latitude and longitude were converted to linear scale using Haversine formula. The calculated distance between the Geo-coordinates using excel spreadsheet function was validated using, The Great Circle calculator on the website of National Hurricane Centre and Central Pacific Hurricane Centre, US Dept of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, USA using the WGS84/NAD83/GRS80 earth model from the longitude and latitude as an input parameter and output as km. 10 random coordinates of the data were fed into an aforesaid calculator and calculated distances using Eqn.2 in excel spreadsheet were subjected for statistical comparison using SigmaStat Ver.3.5. Weekly markets were classified using thematic mapping techniques based on periodicity characteristics, the area covered by the weekly markets, the number of stalls, the nature of weekly markets, the hierarchy of weekly markets, and the influential range of rural weekly markets.

Sample Selection

This research employs a method of sampling that is most suited to achieving its objectives: stratified sampling. This technique will not only help in reducing the number of respondents to be covered but also supports in effective sample selection without bias (Nyakaana, 1999). The informants are divided into three broad categories:

- Informants at weekly markets
- Informants from the community
- Government officials

A representative sample of 25% will be taken from each of the broad categories. The sample of informants at each rural weekly market was done by using the stratified sampling technique at two levels.

Level 1: maps for Baksa District were obtained from Mushalpur district headquarters and were used to identify development locks and villages in which rural markets are located. Using the administrative map of Baksa district, development blocks with periodic markets were identified as shown in table below. All eight (8) development blocks covering one hundred and ten (110) markets were covered under the study in order to get the exact location and understand the issues specific to each market.

Level 2: All identified market were visited and inspection of the market layout, produce/ commodities sold including services being offered as well as the commodities and services they offer for exchange.

S.No.	**Name of Development Block**	**Head Quarter**	**Area (sq.Km)**	**No. of villages**	**Population**	**No. of periodic markets**
1.	Baska Development Block	Mushalpur	241.60	77	93,723	11
2.	Tihu-Barama Development Block	Barama	135	49	70,217	12
3.	Dhamdhama Development Block	Baganpara	210	51	95,350	8
4.	Jalah Development Block	Jalahghat	294	129	1,36,265	16
5.	Tamulpur Development Block	Tamulpur	875	120	1,48,561	19
6.	Goreswar Development Block	Goreswar	228	97	2,27,472	11
7.	Nagrijuli Development Block	Nagrijuli	483	77	1,16,497	21
8.	Gobardhana Development Block	Barpeta Rd	347.78	87	1,56,331	12
TOTAL						**110**

Data Analysis

After establishing the research process, questionnaire creation, and data collection procedure, the next was data analysis procedure. The data analysis process for this study is divided into two parts: the pilot study phase and the main study phase. The analysis and interpretation of the data incorporate both the empirical and the theoretical approaches. Data collected from the field was first rectified and tabulated subsequently.

Then it was tested by appropriate statistical techniques such as the nearest neighbour analysis, the chi-square test, One-way ANOVA, Holm-Sidak test, Mann Whitney Rank sum test, Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test and Friedman Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance.

Results & Discussion

Rural markets have the most widespread system of exchange and not only play a very important role in the socio-economic development of the rural area but also are very important in overall planning and regional development. The role of these markets in planning and development is very critical. These markets are the first point of contact for farmers with the market and various marketing channels and act as the nerve centre for social, cultural and economic activities in the rural areas. Present study was conducted to understand the impact of the markets on rural population in terms of reach and connectivity, market happenings etc using geospatial tools like GPS and QGIS application. This questionnaire-based survey was conducted in 116 rural markets in the district of Baksa to get the GPS point locations of all rural periodic markets using GPS Mobile Location Finder application. Market calendar data were obtained for 2019-2020 from respective Block development offices in Baksa district and details on the market day, distance, area was obtained from the market calendar.

Objective 1: *"To examine the spatial distribution of periodic markets in Baksa District and the factors for their development".*

The spatial distribution of rural periodic markets within Baksa district was controlled and analyzed using spatial statistic method and QGIS Application. The Average Nearest Neighbour (ANN) one of the many distance-based point pattern analysis is frequently used to study, model, envision and interpret the point data to determine the exchanges between points and to identify whether there is a significant clustering of points in the given area or not (Yuan, et al, 2020). The objective of the analysis is to calculate ANN Index (R) that reveals how clustered or dispersed the locations of rural periodic markets are within the given area.

A total of 116 rural periodic markets have been registered in Baksa district with Nagrijuli block registering the maximum number of markets (20) followed by Tamulpur block (19 markets), Baksa block (18 markets), Jalah block (17 markets), Tihu- Barama block (12 markets) Gobardhana block (11 markets), Goreswar block (11 markets) and Dhamdama block registering least number of markets (8). The Average Nearest Neighbor (ANN) tool gives five values: Observed Mean Distance, Expected Mean Distance and Nearest Neighbor Ratio (R) z-score, and p-value.

The broad distribution of rural weekly markets and their periodicity characteristics are discussed in the spatial distribution aspects of weekly markets in the Baksa District. The distributions of weekly markets in the Baksa district were found to be geographically clustered with R value less than 1 (R = 0.006); z-scores = -1.12; $p < 0.1$). With small z-scores, there is a small probability which is less than 1% likelihood that this clustered pattern could be a result of random chance, so, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Another Important feature of market geography is the temporal characteristic. It has the same significance as geographic distribution. A location's market day is determined by several factors, including its proximity to other markets, the demand for commodities, social and cultural factors, etc. Except for daily markets, certain days of the week have the greatest number of market activities. Each week, 183 market days are held throughout the whole Baksa district. The null hypothesis is rejected since the value of chi-square (X^2 = 96.45) is significantly greater than the crucial values of 10.64, 12.59, and 16.81. The significance test indicates that the increased number of market events per week differ considerably from the expected number of market events.

The organization of rural markets in respect of space and time is proof of the level of synchronization and integrity in the marketing system. But this fact is not valid for all the blocks in the district. Survey results showed a very interesting picture. Nagrijuli block has a maximum number of markets, but it stands lowest in terms of trade of agriculture produce through the route of markets and vice versa holds true for Gobardhana, with least number of markets the block has reported highest trade of agriculture produce. The day-wise occurrence of the market reveals that Friday is the peak day in a week where maximum market happenings take place, i.e., 36 markets, mainly due to the dominance of socio-religious factors in the study area.

Object 2: *"To examine the market calendar regulation leading to variance in the occurrence of periodic markets on each day of the week."*

Periodicity is an additional essential component of rural markets. Based on the existing agricultural system, the periodicity of the market is a necessity. Observing only one market day every seven-day week allows farmers extra time for other agricultural tasks and to prepare for the next market meeting (Mulimani, 2006). The cyclicity of rural markets is a general characteristic, ranging from weekly to biweekly to daily, etc. There are daily or biweekly markets in the Baksa district, in addition to weekly markets.

Out of the 116 market centres in the district of Baksa, 95 operate once per week, 11 operate twice per week, and 10 operate daily. According to the data, Baksa Development block has the highest number of daily and biweekly markets, while Nagrijuli block has the highest number of weekly markets.

A further heat map was developed to visually assess the marketplaces and the volume of trade activity occurring on each market. It was interesting to see that the markets in the Baksa, Dhamdama, and Nagrijuli blocks were more diverse and efficient in terms of commercial activity, whereas the rural markets in the Gobardhana and Jalah blocks did not suffer a substantial influx of commercial activity.

Objective 3: *"To examine the existing position of agricultural marketing in Baksa District with a view to ascertain its problems and prospects."*

To ascertain the existing market situation, Respondents on the ground were asked to answer a carefully crafted series of questions designed to elucidate the practise, perception, and needs of Baksa's Rural Markets. In survey-1, respondents were provided questionnaires at the village level within a 5-kilometer radius of the marketplaces to prevent misunderstandings. In the second study, questionnaires were administered at the market level to buyers and/or traders to prevent misunderstandings. The surveys contained both closed and open-ended questions, depending on the type of information sought.

These questions are intended to collect information on Socio-economic characteristics of the buyer/trader accessing periodic markets for business, Source of produce for trade, frequency, and pattern of buyers' visits to markets, facilities available at the market level to support trade activities, taxes and other market fees applicable, factors that influence the spatial distribution and development of rural markets, conditions that are attracting traders and buyers, and factors that influence the spatial distribution and development of rural markets.

In order to ascertain the market situation, this study included 1,005 participants. Survey I was conducted on the Farmer producer at the individual home level to analyse their opinion on the markets in the district of Baksa. The final number of participants included in the study based on criteria for inclusion and exclusion and incomplete replies is 951. Slovin equation recorded the 95% confidence interval with a margin of error of 3.177 percent for the survey conducted. The participant in this study represents 0.1% of the population of the Baksa district in Assam. Most survey respondents were farmers (88%). It was followed by daily wage labourers (9%), individuals engaged in petty business (2%), and artisans/weavers/craftspeople (1%). Most of them (97%) unanimously agreed that they sell their produce through rural markets. Nearly 83% of respondents sell their produce in more than one rural area, according to the results.

Comparatively, 320 individuals participated in Survey II, which was done to examine the buyer/seller perspective on the district's markets. After removal based on inclusion-exclusion criteria and partial replies, the number of individuals remaining for analysis is 220. The Slovin equation recorded the 95 percent confidence interval with a margin of error of 6.59 percent for the poll that was done. This group consisted primarily of intermediary purchasers (48%) and dealers of farm produce (21%). The remaining individuals dealt in Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG). 53% of respondents sell up to 50% of their annual product through rural markets, and around 40% sell up to 255 of their annual produce through rural markets, demonstrating that a substantial amount of agricultural produce is sold at the farm gate. This conclusion is supported by the findings of Survey-2, which indicate that more than fifty percent of respondents purchase commodities from sources other than rural marketplaces.

In addition, Survey I indicated that 20% of farmer producers have access to the local market in times of emergency. Up to 3 percent of respondents indicated that they sold their extra produce on the market. In addition to using the local rural markets to sell their goods, the vast majority of them (93%) also utilise the same venue to fulfil their home needs. To cover their daily necessities, meat/poultry/eggs topped their shopping list (83%), followed by fruits and vegetables (77%), home (FMCG) products (74%), and clothing (64%).

Traders and consumers are the primary participants in weekly markets. The behaviour of participants in periodic markets demonstrated that each periodic market centre has an impact on the average influential range of each weekly market centre. A distinction in behaviour is revealed by categorizing traders. Traders (both part-time and full-time) go to weekly markets to make the most money, whereas consumers go to weekly marketplaces to meet their own needs. Consumers have the option of selecting weekly market centres based on their own needs. In the part-time category, producer sellers account for most of the sales. Full-time buyer sellers go to more markets on a regular basis than producer sellers. The potential of products to perish and their durability also influence how far traders go from their homes.

The service provider makes a point of visiting as many markets as possible on a regular basis. Because most traders return home at the end of the day after completing the trading activity, itinerancy in weekly markets is individualistic rather than aggregative. Consumers that attend weekly markets in Baksa District have a significantly broader selection of rural weekly markets to choose from, based on their convenience and socio-economic position. They always choose weekly markets based on their own needs for items. The primary goals of consumers are to obtain fresh products at low prices, engage in social interaction, and have access to necessary goods when visiting marketplaces on a regular basis.

These marketplaces sell a diverse range of goods, not only to meet the requirements of the poorest members of the rural population but also to gather and export village craft to urban markets, as well as to meet the

needs of customers from Bhutan. The sale of bulky and rural craft products like mekhlas, sarees, gamocha, baskets, ropes, mats, and ceramics is centralized at these marketplaces. These periodic markets also provide the rural population with the tools and other equipment needed by cultivators to till the field. Livestock is significant to most of the weekly marketplaces. In some weekly marketplaces, wholesale trade comes before retail commerce. There is also a seasonal variation in attendance, with peak attendance following harvests and celebrations and low attendance when the villagers are working in their fields. The participant's behavior is directly linked to temporal factors. Larger markets offer a wider range of goods and services, attracting a larger number of participants. Because they serve their immediate local community, small marketplaces are at the heart of horizontal exchange. Some higher-grade weekly markets cater to perform within a large catchment region. Some smaller markets have been shown to act as feeder markets for larger markets and vice versa. The local community is responsible for the survival of these little marketplaces. Local and perishable commodities and articles of everyday use are the mainstays of these marketplaces. In these markets, vegetable and Kirana shops are common. Higher-order markets, on the other hand, collect and distribute locally produced and manufactured goods to urban market centers and long-distance markets.

Aside from regular markets, larger periodic markets are related to animal/ livestock, including fish and poultry markets. It is also where wholesalers and retailers congregate. The attendance at weekly marketplaces is not always consistent. Some rural weekly markets draw many people from the local area, while others draw a smaller crowd. It is heavily reliant on the wide range of items and services available at market centers. Rural weekly markets conduct trade transactions in two ways: vertically and horizontally. Apart from rice (the most traded commodity across all markets), turmeric, tomato, lemon, poultry, fish, coconut, and jute are some of the commodities that are widely sold and transacted in the district's urban market centers. During the summer, these markets also sell certain local and imported fruits. The markets located at the border area between India & Bhutan are significant and attract a very large number of buyers from both sides.

Unorganized marketing has resulted in several challenges that consumers must deal with on a regular basis. From the survey, it came to light that the markets lack an adequate waste disposal system, that drainage is in bad condition, and that the internal road system is also in poor shape. The collected revenue is not used to enhance the markets because the lessee's primary and sole goal is to profit from the leased market.

Even though a system of leasing out markets is in place, the region's rural markets suffer from a lack of suitable laws and regulations for market management and development. The inadequacy of even the most basic infrastructure is evident evidence of this. As a result, the administration must enact adequate regulations that may be enforced against the lessee to promote and develop the market. Storage, transportation, warehousing, price discovery, weighment, restricted or no access to money, the presence of middlemen, and other issues plague Baksa's rural weekly markets. The growth of rural markets is critical

in the current environment, particularly with the advancement of technology in the agricultural system. It is feasible to boost the rural economy in the region by having a well-developed and regulated rural market.

Rural weekly marketplaces in Baksa District play an important role in bringing diverse groups closer together. Unfortunately, no structured planning for the development of these market sites has been begun. To stimulate indigenous marketing activity, some structured planning is required. It is a source for bridging the gap between urban and rural market centers, as well as for higher-level market centers. To ensure the prosperity of periodic market centers, precise planning is required.

Objective 4: *"To study the Impact of the periodic markets on the economic conditions of the region."*

Every rural marketplace's commodity arrangement suggests the demands of people/actors as an answer to the demand of culture, history, tradition, and available environmental resources. Indigenous, regional, and exotic goods are traded in these markets. The exchange of these items in rural marketplaces satisfies a broad range of demands and wants. The trading structure for these commodities is never stable; it fluctuates based on temporal and seasonal fluctuations.

To facilitate comprehension, the commodities or goods exchanged were separated into distinct categories. For tabulation and analysis, data was categorised by industry (i.e., Grains, Lentils, Oilseeds, Plantations, Livestock including fish and poultry, spices, fruits, and vegetables). It was evident from the obtained data that important goods sold fall within the category of agriculture and horticulture.

In addition to agricultural items, the need for fast-moving consumer goods has been rising. From the results, it was clear that agriculture plays a dominant role in terms of the commodities exchanged. However, it is important to highlight that there is no regulated market in the district; thus, seasonal changes in quantity and price are absorbed only by the producers.

Farmers in the district of Baksa have little patience to wait for higher prices for their rice, cereals, grains, and pulses, nor do they have adequate or extensive storage facilities to preserve the quality of their produce. In June, July, August, September, and October, the availability of a variety of agricultural and horticultural products is at its lowest. The quantity grows from January until May, and then drops. However, it is difficult to list all of the items and commodities sold in rural market areas, and doing so serves no important function. However, the commodities can be categorised as perishable, semi-perishable, and durable.

Among the commodities sold in market areas are handloom, readymade clothing, food grains, vegetables, fruits, ornamental products, bangles, stationery items, spices, cattle, and meat. These marketplaces facilitate the distribution of agricultural and other products, as well as the sale of artisanal goods and services. They

serve as local and regional distribution hubs. As expected, these market centres are crucial to the economic growth of the region as a whole.

Even while the transport services have improved over the years (in terms of private vehicles), it is still insufficient to fulfil the ever-increasing demand of the marketplaces, as seen by the conversations on the ground. Intriguingly, larger markets like as Mushalpur, Tamulpur, and the like serve as feeder markets for smaller rural markets in the districts.

Without appropriate road connectivity, markets cannot thrive. Within the district, railway connectivity is limited, and it is difficult for traders from outside the State to come on a regular basis. In addition, the degree of connectedness secures the future and prospects of weekly markets. Graph-theoretic measures of connectedness suggest that the Goreswar, Nagrijuli blocks' periodic markets have a higher cyclomatic number, implying that future extensions of connectivity between periodic markets could result in the creation of an improved marketing system. The findings of the alpha, beta, and gamma measures show that the district is moderately connected to its immediate surroundings. The main goal of weekly markets is to meet the requirements of the local community. Because they are closer to their neighbouring towns, relative accessibility to weekly marketplaces has enhanced the success of some weekly markets.

Objective 5: *"To suggest some measure to overcome the problems of Agricultural Marketing in the region"*

Baksa's agricultural marketing system and market are not geared toward growth and development. The following are some of the observations drawn from the study. Markets are managed by lessees, who take over the operation of markets in accordance with the laws.

I) The Municipal Act of 1936;
II) The Agricultural Produce Market Regulation Act of 1972; and
III) Third, the Panchayat Act of 1994.

These three agencies work in independence from one another. While the Assam State Agricultural Marketing Board (ASAMB) does invest in market development, municipalities, town councils, and panchayats do not. As a result, this rural weekly (primary) marketplaces, which form the backbone of the district's network, remain underdeveloped. They are overcrowded, unsanitary, and lacking in need-based facilitating infrastructure, supporting services, and innovations, among other things.

The bidding procedure used to lease out the markets is similar to that of a cartel, which leases out markets in everyone's name year after year and turns after turn. Anchalik Parishad has no part in the market's

development once the bid is finalized. Anchalik Parishad, Zilla Parishad, and Gram Panchayat split the bid money in the proportion of 40:40:20. The revenue sharer is not responsible for the market's growth.

Market fees are structured differently in different markets. Lessee's charges are not codified, and he is allowed to charge whatever fees he wants. The income of the money is not ploughed back into the system in the absence of any regulation or checks. Government revenue evasion and illogical money collection have resulted in underdeveloped markets and infrastructure. Although there is a significant quantity of money collected weekly, the market's income has been underreported due to a lack of receipts or the issuance of incorrect receipts. The assessment of income is challenging due to unsystematic and unreasonable charges that vary from poultry, pigs, fish, and meat. Weighment units like pon in betel nut, gussi and dicha in beetle leaves, Basta in rice, number in oranges, and other local measurements are common. Because these units must be converted to kilograms and quintals, the estimate is merely a rough estimate.

The marketplaces are leased for a period of one year, with leasing amounts ranging from two thousand lakhs to fifteen lakhs. There is collusion in lease grants, and it was discovered during discussions with market authorities that leasing stays in the same family year after year. There is a need for rent regulation. Farmers will struggle to achieve the benefits of agricultural production and prospects for higher profits unless appropriate marketing techniques are instilled in physical markets.

Need-based considerations are not considered when building infrastructure. The market's settings and designs were discovered to be of little practical use. The majority of the platform built in most of the markets in all eight development blocks was discovered to be unfinished due to the lack of a roof and an uncemented platform floor, reducing its utility. In such a scenario, the overflow of trade on the road is obvious.

Markets are seen as an income source. Agricultural produce arrives in enormous quantities in municipal markets, and the proceeds are utilized to fund urban infrastructure. The goal of a contractor or a lessee operating and managing periodic markets is to make a profit. Markets are strewn with trash, clogged with murky water, and unpleasant to producers and other market users.

The markets are harmed by a lack of rule and regulation enforcement. Market authorities have mostly disregarded market development, and there is no one to oversee the market's activities, which have gradually grown exploitative and unfavourable to farmers.

Objective 6: *"To integrate the recommendations to existing or proposed Government Policy."*

Bringing Amendments in the marketing system: Improvements in the current system are needed to remove impediments and redundancy in the process, as well as to reduce uncertainty by providing the necessary infrastructure. To bring efficiency and participation to the reform process, it will be necessary to encourage private sector investment and value creation in the supply chain.

The development process includes redefining property rights, management responsibilities, and the relative roles of various government and non-government institutions. This process also builds a person-to-good link in terms of who can trade and what can be traded. A market participant's right to participate is likewise protected by market law.

When the markets are held, the allocation of stalls, the types of products that can be sold, the location of selling space for different commodities, revenue collection and hygiene, and multiple payments and charges in the market are all regulated. When contracts and other liabilities are defined in these reforms, the market's effectiveness is strengthened, and a dispute resolution system is provided.

The Model Act, which has been enacted by the State, introduces a new leash into the marketing environment. Contract farming rules, the establishment of private markets, and spot exchanges will all aid in bringing about the required improvements. Agricultural markets and marketing systems must be proactive in responding to change and sensitive to new needs. The following management measures are suggested for bringing about change in marketing and inculcating excellent marketing practices to establish markets that are competitive.

Introducing methods to enhance efficiency of the market under Local bodies: Municipal markets, which are daily markets, attract buyers and sellers and generate larger revenue than other markets. Similarly, the primary and weekly markets are key trading venues for agricultural products. Despite the blooming malpractices and unrestricted overcharges by a small percentage of the market, trading occurs without restraint.

While the owner can remain the same, concrete actions must be taken to free these markets from exploitative behaviors. When a contract is awarded to lessees to operate in the market, the terms and conditions should be specific about the contractor's responsibilities as a facilitator, and engaging in exploitative practices should result in a penalty.

In the current structure, the lessor has complete control over the escalation of charges, and this power is uncontrolled. Market-led extension training can be provided by institutions such as SIRD and SAMB. Regular consultation, facilitation, and handholding among various institutions will eventually create a favorable marketing environment in the district.

Management and function separation: Markets are operated for retailing purposes under the Municipality Act; however, it has been discovered that their functions of wholesaling and retailing agricultural products overlap.

To separate the market functions in the Municipality and Town Committee markets, legal intervention is required. Agricultural product wholesale should be prohibited in the market, and if the AAMB or equivalent is willing to take on the responsibility, the wholesale business should be entrusted to them for regulation. This would simplify market functions and thereon responsibilities among the parallel institutions that manage markets in the district.

Strengthening the Traders' Association for Market Operations: With economic liberalization, there is a greater emphasis on the market, business, and profit. Traders are familiar with and understand market patterns. The agricultural traders' association has the potential to both make their members' jobs easier and increase the efficiency of the marketing chain.

Traders and their associations must be involved in the operation and management of the market. Because of their considerable influence and long-standing relationships with producers, fellow traders, purchasers in these destination markets, and service providers, they can effectively operate and manage marketplaces, encompassing all segments. There is a need to experiment with new ideas for improving the marketing system by allowing market traders to run and administer marketplaces within the legal framework.

Farmer groups must be strengthened to engage in marketing: Lack of financial and physical assets, lack of access to crucial information and services, lack of negotiating power and competitiveness owing to the production of small quantities of low-quality products, and a lack of self-confidence are some of the market barriers that small and marginal farmers face all the time.

The establishment of farmer groups at the village level should be prioritized to support the market activity. The benefit of collective groups will directly benefit the small and marginal farmers due to enhanced access. The mix of skill sets such as group organization and management, internal saving and lending, experimentation and innovation (understanding how to access and apply new technology), and basic market abilities is the key to this approach for boosting small farmers' ability for market engagement.

Basic market skills equip small groups of farmers to produce efficiently for the market by structuring their production (for example, crop variety, planting dates, planting area, and so on) to meet market demand. These abilities also assist farmers in organizing harvest and post-harvest management so that they may jointly provide their products to purchasers with the quality, quantity, and timing that they require. Farmers, as a result, will be able to increase their sale price and cash income.

Further, developing fundamental bargaining skills can assist marginal farmers in increasing their market power, overcoming hurdles to selling their goods, and increase their profitability.

Limitation of the Study

The study aims to explore many aspects of rural markets in the Baksa district, such as market management and marketing processes, laws and regulations, spatial market arrangement, and diverse market participants, among others. Selling and buying behaviour was investigated as part of the marketing process. This research looks at the rural market system in the area as a whole rather than focusing on a single aspect of market management. This is being done because no earlier study of Baksa's rural weekly markets has been conducted. The subjective nature of data obtained may be biased in numerous ways because the bulk of market partner respondents are illiterate and come from a rural background. Despite several difficulties faced during data collection, a sincere effort was made to collect and display the data in a more scientific and systematic manner.

Official Government Statistics provide the foundation for secondary data. Consequently, the validity of the results is constrained by the dependability of the data. There are numerous instances in which there are discrepancies between one source and another about the same variable and efforts have been made to approximate the reliable data. Sincere efforts were made, to the greatest extent feasible, to acquire reasonably adequate data through building rapport with the respondents. While canvassing schedules, the data provided by respondents was examined and cross-examined. Regarding the background information (profile) for the Baksa district, we have utilised census data from 2011 when applicable, as our study focuses on rural markets in the district for the years 2019-2021 and the data was collected in 2020-21.

Area For Future Research

Although attempts have been made to investigate various aspects of the rural weekly market mechanism in the Baksa district's tribal economy, this study cannot be considered exhaustive. There are additional related aspects that require further research. Some of the aspects are:

- Assessment of the potential for retail trade in the Baksa district.
- Commercial Activities at the Baksa district Fairs
- Seasonal influences on the marketing and trading activities of the Baksa district.
- The role of women in tribal commerce.
- Marketing effectiveness of urban consumer goods in tribal and underdeveloped regions.
- Possibilities for marketing non-agricultural goods in the district of Baksa

In-depth research in the first two areas will help to comprehend the district's other marketing network and compare its efficiency with that of the weekly market systems. The study of the influence of seasonal factors on marketing and trading activities will shed light on the seasonal variation of market arrivals in relation to their prices and the seasonal variation in the trading of various products. Women merchants play a significant role in the retail and haat commerce of the Baksa district. Their business proficiency in a variety of trades will be revealed by research on them. The study of the marketing efficiency of urban consumer goods will aid in understanding the marketing channels for these products and identifying the most cost-effective and efficient channel. Research into the scope of marketing non-agricultural products will assist in identifying the most effective marketing channel for these goods.

References

Borthakur, M. (1993). *The Periodic Market System: A Comparative Study of Tribal and Peasant Economies with Special Reference to North East India: A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Ph.D in Geography. School of Environment Science, North East.*

Deka, N. a. (2010). *Periodic Market System in the Rural Areas of Brahmaputra Valley, Assam: The Case of Muktapur Hat. North Eastern Geographer, 36 (1&2), pp. 65-79.*

Deka, Parag Kr. and Sarmah, Dinesh (2012). *Constraints and prospects of agricultural marketing in North-east India.* Internat. J. Com.& Bus. Manage, 5(2): 145-151

Sharma, K.K. (2018). *Agricultural marketing in north-east India with special reference to Assam, International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, Volume 5 Issue 6, pp. 115-119

Mulimani, A. A. (2012). *Periodic Markets and Rural Development: A Case Study of Haveri District, . Golgen Research Thoughts, 1(XI) , pp. 1-4.*

Mulla, S. A. (2014). *Functional Structure of Periodic Markets: A Case Study of Dharwad District,. Science Park Research Journal, 1(29) , 1-8.*

Ramakrishnan, R. (2006). *Rural Marketing in India- Strategies and Challenges, . New Century Publications, New Delhi, 89* .

Roy, R. &. (2010). *A Geographical Study of Periodic Market Places in Kaliyaganj Block Uttar Dinajpur,. West Bengal, The Geographer, 57(2), , pp. 71-79.*

Ryngnga, P. &. (2012). *Periodic Market and Rural Development: An Appraisal study of Cherrapunjee of Meghalaya,. International Journal of Social Science Tomorrow, 1(9), 1-10.*

Bromley R (1987) : *Periodic Markets and Rural Development Policy, Contributions to Indian Geography, Heritage Publishers, New Delhi.*

Wanmali S (1987) : *Periodic Markets, Periodic Marketing and Rural Development in India, Contributions to Indian Geography, Heritage Publishers, New Delhi.*

Mulimani A . A (2 0 0 6) : *Marketing Geography A Spatio – Functional Perspective. Premier Publication, Dharwad.*

Raju, B. (2016). *A study on Technological Impact on Rural Markets in India; International Journal of Research and Development – A Management Review (IJRDMR), Volume-5 (Issue-3), Pg 80-84*

Ingle, D.V. (2015). *A study of rural market potentials in India with specific reference to Akols District (MS) – International Journal of Applied Research; 1(2): Pg 131-134*

Economic survey, 2010-11, *Government of India, New Delhi (India)*

Hatai, L.D. & Panda, D. (2015). *Agricultural Marketing Information System – A Case Study of Traders in Meghalaya – Economic Affairs, 60(2): Pg 263-271.*

Ryngnga, P. &. (2012). *Periodic Market and Rural Development: An Appraisal study of Cherrapunjee of Meghalaya,. International Journal of Social Science Tomorrow, 1(9), 1-10.*

Mbaukaan, E.I. & Sanusi, Y. A. (2018). *A Synthesis of Livelihood Opportunities from the Periodic Markets in Niger-East Senatorial District, Niger state, Nigeria; International Journal of Innovative Research and Advanced Studies, Volue 5 (issue-1), Pg 182-188*

Hugar, S.I (1982). *Role of Weekly markets in Development of Rural Areas of Gadag Taluka, A minor Research Project Sponsored by UGC. New Delhi*

Aranca & IBEF (2018). *Meghalaya: Abode of Clouds, State Report, India Brand Equity Foundation State report series . April, 2018. Retrieved June 2018, from https://www.ibef.org/states/Meghalaya.aspx*

Rais Ahmad, *Cooperatives and Integrated Rural Development Programme, Mittai Publications, New Delhi, 1996, p. 13*